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An Analysis of the Impact of Motivating Factors on Tourism Agencies in Turkey

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Abstract: This study investigates the relations between agencies and hotels in Turkey, from the perspective of business to business marketing. Drawing on the data obtained from 189 agencies by a survey. The results of the research show that six variables are important. Their order of importance as followings: Communication with the agencies, supports for agencies, the relationship between agencies and hotel companies, promotion activities for clients and agencies, promotion activities encouraging and out of business relations between agencies and hotel company.

Keywords: agency, tourism, distribution channel.

Introduction

This study investigates the motives influencing the perception of tourism agencies towards to hotel companies. This research will try to illustrate why tourism agencies prefer one hotel brand to others. There is a little study in the literature on the subject how agencies could be motivated by hotel companies. Generally, authors refer to other aspects of relationship between agencies and hotels. Karamustafa (2000:24) emphasized price-related problems which are tour operators frequently encountered. Jorgensen and Zaccour (2003:801) discuss the effects of marketing strategies on the other member's actions.

Tourism agencies are the most common intermediaries between the guest and a hotel company. They play four important roles at the market. Firstly, they act as information brokers between guests and managers. Secondly they process transactions by booking rooms and transferring money. Thirdly, they provide advice to their customers. Finally, they provide better services by considering their customers' needs and feedback. Tourism agencies help with the customers' safety, good value, and high quality for the guests. These intermediaries do business with the hotels much more regularly than the guests do. Most travel agencies receive little feedback on their clients' satisfaction with their hotels client. The majority of travel agencies think that no complaints as indicator of clients' satisfaction.

From hoteliers' point of view travel agencies want to improve their relationship with hotel companies carry out joint-marketing activities and include more detailed information in the sales brochures (Medina-Munoz et al. 2002).

Buhalis and Licata (2001) underline electronic communication devices affecting the intermediaries in the tourism industry. They explain that using the internet, the interactive digital television and the mobile devices bring new intermediaries called e-mediaries. From the point of experts, they suggest to reengineering business process concerning the relationship between hotels and agencies. Ozturan and Roney (2004) find out that travel agencies cannot use the internet effectively in Turkey. Travel agencies still use traditional marketing communication channels such as printed media and telephone.

Knowing of the expectations of agencies and distributor firms is important for keeping successful relationship. The industrial resellers expect financial and competitive differentiation benefits from main company. A finding of a study on the USA shows that greater benefit differentiation leads to fewer financial benefits (Ghosh et al., 2004)

Supplier firms try to attract agencies using different applications and methods. For example economic and non-economic tools are preferred to encourage agencies by the hotels. The following two parts will explain economic and non-economic tools respectively.

1. Economic Tools For Motivation

Economic tools that aim to motivate agencies are the pecuniary ones. The agencies are encouraged by these tools. As a consequence of using economic tools, agencies could increase their profits and so intermediaries willing to make further cooperation with the hotel companies. There are many economic tools in the practice that being used to affect intermediaries directly. Some selected important economic tools are explained below.

Firstly, quotas are used as an economic tool. Supplier firms aim to make the members of distribution channel join actively in marketing their own products using quotas. In order to make their distribution system that they used active and effective, both sides want to use law sanctions based on agreements or other powers (Aksoy, 1990:14-19).

Secondly, discounts, financial aids, compensation are used as economic tools. Such tools could be used to decrease the conflicts and improve the cooperations. For realization of it, suppliers apply discounts, financial aids, compensations, and setting protective rules by an agreement (Islamoglu, 1999:440-442). Intermediaries expect from the suppliers financial aids and competitive differentiation (Gosh et al., 2004). Tsay (2001) points out those intermediaries could be motivated by cash discounts and give back policy. It is also suggested that supplier firms could encourage the intermediaries using the difference price for in favor of intermediaries (Li and Dant, 1999).

Thirdly, promotion, advertising and co-marketing are also used for motivation economically. (i) Promotion activities of supplier firms support the intermediaries' activities such as giving gifts (e.g. pens, calendars, etc.) in special day and religious festivals. At the same time, intermediaries' promotion activities also support the suppliers. This creates a mutual support between agencies and hotels. (ii) Advertising, public relations, personal selling and the other marketing activities of hotels motivate agencies. (iii) Co-marketing activities would be providing the reduction of cost and increase of effectiveness for both agents and the hotel companies.

To sum up, this section explained main economic tools that motivate intermediaries such as quotas, discounts, financial aids, compensations, agreements, difference price, cash discounts, co-marketing and promotion activities. Non-economic tools are explained in the following section.

2. Non-Economic Motivation Tools

Non-economic tools to motivate agencies are not pecuniary ones such as communication, personal relationships, participating to decisions, cooperation, problem solving. In practice, the number of non-economic tools is more than economic tools. The most important feature of non-economic tools is that these tools provide some advantages that make intermediaries the same profit with lesser working. Moreover, non-economic tools encourage voluntary efforts in the mid or long term.

There are three factors influencing the recommendation of agencies' a hotel to a client: The quality of communications with intermediaries, the hotel brand name, and the incentives for intermediaries. These communication tools provide hotel companies some advantages. Another three tools that contribute to the hotel companies as the followings: Efficiency of computer systems for reservations, the sales representatives, and the information received in following intermediaries' requests (Dube and Renaghan, 2000:73-74).

Medina-Munoz and Falcon (2000) report that the intermediaries' successes depend on five factors: interorganizational trust, commitment towards the relationship, interorganizational communication (coordination, communication quality, information exchange and participation), conflict resolution and interorganizational dependence. But at the same time they had said there is no model established as an entirely satisfactorily alliance. As a result of their study, in order to improve the impresenting of interorganizational relationships in the tourism industry should be examined from the perspective of tourism agencies, recreational companies, airlines and rental companies.

According to Gilliland (2003:60; 2004:88) there are five factors for the intermediaries of electronic equipment such as credible channel policies, market development support, supplemental contact, high-powered incentives, end-user encouragements. Later, he mentions about 16 subgroups differentiating these factors into subgroups again which contains both economic and morale variables.

Shipley and Egan (1992) report that the countrywide marketing activities of the supplier firms, supported marketing activities of intermediaries, the opportunity of product wideness and open relations and personal relationships between supplier and intermediaries are thought important by intermediaries. They were also underlining that, if there are being low motivated or demoralized intermediaries in the distribution channel, conflicts will be inevitable in this channel and the conflicts prevent the effectiveness of channel. Because intermediaries expect the reward for taking capital risk and labor force. Furthermore intermediaries compare the

rewards of other similar intermediaries, the will cause conflict if there are any disadvantageous difference against them. The first way of cooperation in a distribution channel and preventing conflict is better communication.

Yukselen, (2003:262-263) evaluate the motivation of distribution channel members and conflict among them simultaneously and he shows collaboration, partnership and the activities of programming the distribution as incentives

Motivations of intermediaries are generally related to their expectations. The transformation of four P's (product, price, place and promotion) in the marketing mix into four C's (customer value, convenience, cost, communication) is the most important clue to understand the expectations of intermediaries as industrial customers. Using the elements of marketing mix (4P) as (4C) makes intermediaries' self-confidence. Trust is the first expectation of international intermediaries from the supplier, especially in industrial marketing (Marshall, 2003). As long as intermediaries feel in confidence it is easier to motivate them

Yaprakli (1997) classifies motivation tools as rewarder power, punisher power, or charismatic power for newcomers in the channel. Akin (1997) also adds to these tools three new powers: legal, expertise and leadership. It is known that supplier firms' participating intermediaries making plans and solving problems has positive effects on the interorganizational relationships. (Claro et al. 2003). Since active participation willingly have positive effect for both sides, motivation is an important tool, and lack of motivation is one of the reasons that cause lack of cooperation and conflicts and increase these conflicts (Tek, 1997:563). This reason, when motivation is accepted as the basic factor in cooperation and conflicts, it will be easy to solve the problems since the reason of the problem is determined truly. Actually, relationship between supplier and intermediaries is a kind of human behavior in a group from social-psychological perspective. The trust between intermediaries and supplier firms, relative profit gained from the sold products, cooperation and supplier firms' satisfaction from the intermediaries affect the relationships (Anderson and Narus, 1984). Namely, the trust and satisfaction of the representatives are accepted as trust and satisfaction of intermediaries.

Weber (2001) put forward that the communication tools and using frequency of these tools determine the relationship between supplier and intermediaries. Especially, internet increases the communication and sharing the information, thus increase effectiveness of relationship between suppliers and intermediaries.

Intermediaries positively affect the use high technology communication. As a result of this thought, intermediaries' opinion affects long term relation expectations with the supplier positively (MacDonald and Smith, 2003; Hunter et al., 2003).

Customer services of the supplier firms are important for relationships between supplier and intermediaries (Parasuraman, 1998); because each of the intermediaries is an industrial customer. Being focused on the targets, power equity and cooperation helps firms have contracted to each other reciprocally (Dabholkar and Neeley, 1998).

Dickson and Zhang (2004) determined that the referent power influenced positively on retailer's attitudes toward and non-economic satisfaction with their suppliers in apparel industry in China. They reported that the greater referent power also reduced channel conflict and enhanced economic satisfaction with business performance. They also reported that greater channel conflict was associated with increasing economic satisfaction with business performance.

Anderson and Narus (1990) state the relationship between distributors and supplier firms can be considered in one perspective. Considering the subject both from supplier and distributors' perspective, they had seen distributors as a customer who must be satisfied. Their satisfaction is determined by the outcomes of distributor communication, relative dependence, cooperation, trust and conflict. Whose power will be stronger in this relationship? Anderson and Narus, (1984) reported that distributors' comparison levels of outcomes and comparison levels of alternatives determine the powerful side of this relationship.

Briefly, main non-economic tools that impact motivation of intermediaries are following: Communication, Personal relationships, expectations of intermediaries, participating to decisions, cooperation, problem solving, trust, communication tools, power and customer services,

3. Research Method

The survey was conducted on a sample of privately held Turkish companies in November December 2004 / February 2005. The research was employed on a sample of 240 tourism and traveling agencies. All the sample companies are the members of TURSAB (Association of Turkish Travel Agencies). TURSAB has 4585 member tourism and traveling agencies in countrywide. The names and addresses of these agencies are available from the website of TURSAB. Three copies of the questionnaire were distributed to each of 58 fourth-year undergraduate students of the Department of Management at Afyon Kocatepe University, with the instruction to visit two tourism and traveling agents they chose from the TURSAB database list. The researcher was the convener of the course "Research Methods" for this fourth-year undergraduate programme class. A decision was made by the researcher to assign the students to conduct the survey as a part in fulfilling the course. The participation-

invoking nature of personal communications and the cost constraints led the researcher to prefer this method to mailing the questionnaire. No restriction was applied in choosing the companies. But once a student chose a company, the name of the company was noted down and subsequent students were not allowed to choose it in order to eliminate the possibilities of duplicate questionnaires. The aim and nature of the research were addressed to the students beforehand. They were asked to bring back the questionnaires in stamped and signed form by participants, and were told that further confirmation with the participants may be made later via telephone. The students presented agent each business with a letter of invitation to participate in the survey. Once the invitation was accepted, the students directed the questions to the participants. A few directors (28) rejected the invitation letter to participate in the study by indicating some personal reasons (not having enough time, going for a trip, etc.). In the case of rejection, students have chosen new companies. All the representative directors who accepted the invitation letter completed the questionnaire. The questionnaires were stamped and signed by the participating board member and the students noted the date of the interview. During November 2004 and February 2005, the students returned the questionnaires and for confirmation purposes telephone calls were made to 12 (more than 6% of sample) companies. Telephone interviews with the participants indicated that they were enthusiastic on the subject and answered the questions seriously. Verification of their answers in these phone calls also showed that there were no differences in terms of their answers on the phone and those that they gave in the questionnaires. Therefore, it was not deemed necessary to make further phone calls for confirmation purposes. Of the 212 questionnaires distributed and then collected in that way, 23 were eliminated due mainly to missing information. This resulted in 189 usable questionnaires, corresponding to 79 percent of the questionnaires answered. The reliability of questionnaires is measured by Cronbach Alpha coefficient (Cronbach alpha=0,91) which shows that dataset is reliable to analyze.

A questionnaire that consists of three parts is used in the research. Characteristics of the participants have been investigated in the first part. The attitudes of the intermediaries to hotel companies are measured in the second part. Likert scale is used in this part (1 strongly agree, 2 agree, 3 no idea, 4 disagree, 5 strongly disagree).

The importance of practices of hotel companies and the success of these practices are measured in the third part. Likert scale is used in this part, too (1 very important, 2 important, 3 no idea, 4 not important, 5 not very important). Variables used in this part are based on Gillilands' (2003; 2004) studies. Gilliland (2003; 2004) points out five factors that motivate intermediaries. Credible channel policies, market development support, supplemental contact, high-powered incentives, end-user encouragements.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

		Frequency	Percent
Establishment date	Before 1990	48	25,4
	Between 1990-1999	90	47,6
	Between 2000-2003	51	27,0
Number of hotels (or brand name) that intermediaries represent.	Only one brand	66	35
	Two or more brands	123	64,8
Intermediaries that have another job different from tourism.	Yes	51	27,0
	No	138	73,0

Table-1 shows descriptive statistics of sample companies. A perusal of Table-1 indicates that almost 73% participants have experience in the tourism sector more than five years. It is expected that data based on these experienced companies may yield robust findings. Majority of participants (64,8%) represent two or more hotels or brand names. Majority of agencies (73%), work only as tourism agency, and the rest of the agencies (27%) do additional business such as logistics, public relations, hotel management and real estate agency.

4. Findings

Evaluation of agencies towards hotel, analyzed by using eight expressions which are shown in the following table. The responses to these expressions indicate that tourism agencies intend to maintain relationship with the hotel companies. As shown in Table-2, the weighted mean (1,74) of this expressions indicates that agencies are satisfied by hotel companies. In addition, tourism agencies believe that clients are satisfied with the hotels that are booked (mean=1,39). They also happy for being agencies of hotels and they plan to do business with these hotels.

Table 2 also illustrates that agencies believe that hotel companies make enough effort to increase the profit of agencies (mean=2,03), and give reward to agencies' performance (mean=2,21). It should be noted that this finding is relatively stronger than other findings in Table 2.

Table 2. Evaluation of Agencies regarding Hotel Companies

	Mean	Std. Deviation
We are planning to do business with these hotels for a long time.	1,18	0,50
We are pleased with hotels that we represent them.	1,20	0,40
Our clients are pleased with hotels that we represent them.	1,39	0,64
We are happy for being agencies of hotels.	1,48	0,77
We believe that the products of these hotels are well.	1,51	0,75
Hotel company has a good relationship with us.	1,59	0,82
Hotel company makes efforts to increase our profits.	2,03	1,21
Hotel company rewards our performance.	2,21	1,19
Weighted mean	1,74	

Means= 1 strongly agree, 2 agree, 3 no idea, 4 disagree, 5 strongly disagree

Table 3. Associate Relationship between Agencies and Hotel Companies

	Perceived importance		Evaluation of current situation (services of hotels)		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	%		
			Enough	No idea	Not Enough
Solving the conflict between agencies and hotel company	1,32	,50	66,1	6,4	27,5
Including encouraging factors in the agreement increase to sell hotel products.	1,50	,72	69,8	14,3	15,9
When rival companies want to steal agencies, whether the hotels maintain the relationship with the agencies to continue with them.	1,80	,90	52,9	36,5	10,6
Establishing partner advisory council	1,59	,78	43,9	23,8	32,3
Compensating the loss of reps due to direct sales.	1,67	,88	49,2	27,5	23,3
Giving client list to agency in a market division	1,86	,93	47,1	34,4	18,5
Agreeing a market division belong to an agency	2,33	1,22	32,8	38,6	28,6
Weighted mean	1,72				

Means= 1 very important, 2 important, 3 no idea, 4 not important, 5 not very important

Table 3 shows the associate relationship between agencies and hotel companies. The finding indicates that from the agencies' perspective, the most important subject at relationship between agencies and hotel companies is "solving the conflict between agencies and hotel company". The other variables that affect the relationships between agencies and hotel companies are as follows in turn according to their importance: (1) Including encouraging factors in the agreement increase to sale hotel products, (2) when rival companies want to steal agencies, (3) whether the hotels maintain the relationship with the agencies to continue with them, (4) establishing partner advisory council, (5) compensating the loss of reps due to direct sales, (6) agreeing a market division belong to an agency (7) giving client list to agency in a market division (8) solving the conflict between agencies and hotel company. Majority of agencies (66,1%) perceive that "solving the conflict between agencies and hotel company" and "encouraging agreements to sale hotel company".

Table 4. Supports for Agencies

	Perceived importance		Evaluation of current situation (services of hotels)		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	%		
			Enough	No idea	Not Enough
Representative's ability in communication	1,11	,32	77,8	20,1	2,1
Hotels catalogs and brochures	1,27	,55	87,8	4,2	7,94
Providing information for agencies about products and sales methods	1,47	,57	70,6	17,6	11,8
Special communication opportunities between agencies and hotels	1,47	,74	76,2	15,9	7,9
Training meeting	1,52	,72	68,8	11,6	19,6
Rewarding successful agencies	1,53	,79	50,8	21,7	27,5
Participating to fairs	1,55	,69	58,2	21,7	20,1
Advertorials	1,58	,76	64,0	13,8	22,2
Appropriating financial funds for agencies' marketing activities	1,76	,82	37,0	27,5	35,5
Certification programs for agencies	1,74	,73	54,0	20,1	25,9
Allocating more financial funds for market development	1,89	,80	42,8	28,6	28,6
Number of hotel staff for selling hotel products	2,08	,94	74,6	17,5	7,9
Weighted mean	1,58				

Means= 1 very important, 2 important, 3 no idea, 4 not important, 5 not very important

Support methods for agencies are evaluated in Table 4. Based on the findings in the table, it could be suggested that representative's ability in communication is very important who represent the hotel against agencies and it is found that majority of hotels are successful in this subject (77,8%). The findings also indicate that brochures and catalogs are important to support agencies to find new clients. Hotels' brochures and catalogs are perceived successfully by agencies. Information about sales methods is perceived satisfactory (87,8%). Providing information for agencies about products, sales methods, and number of hotel staff for selling hotel products, special communication opportunities between agencies and hotels are found adequate.

Hotel companies' financial funds which are kept for market development and agencies' marketing activities are perceived inadequate. While half of the hotel companies are found successful at rewarding agencies' performance, 27,5% of agencies believe that hotels do not reward their performance.

Table 5. Communication with the Agencies

	Perceived importance		Evaluation of current situation (services oh hotels)		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	%		
			Enough	No idea	Not Enough
One to one relationship between representative of hotels and agencies'.	1,32	,47	84,1	5,8	10,1
Information on the internet (online support, training)	1,44	,59	79,8	10,1	10,1
Using internet to communicate the agencies	1,44	,59	82,0	7,9	10,1
Communication programs for better work relationships	1,48	,50	69,8	14,3	15,9
Giving information about new products	1,48	,70	85,7	12,2	2,1
Meeting for agencies	1,65	,98	65,6	10,1	24,3
Defining price and quota automatically	1,89	,82	49,2	34,9	15,9
Weighted mean	1,52				

Means= 1 very important, 2 important, 3 no idea, 4 not important , 5 not very important

As long as hotels have enough information about agencies, they encounter fewer problems in dealing with customers. Therefore, communication with agencies has special importance. The communication between hotels and agencies is analyzed in Table 5. It is found that the most important variable concerning with the communication is the person who represents the hotel against agencies; especially the skills of representative have a decisive role. Majority of agencies (84,1%) perceive that one to one relationship between representative of hotels and agencies' is pleasing. Majority of the agencies think that using internet, giving information about products, and communication programs are important.

Table 6. Out of Business Relations between Agencies and Hotel Company

	Perceived importance		Evaluation of current situation (services oh hotels)		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	%		
			Enough	No idea	Not Enough
Entertainment together	2,26	,96	39,6	30,2	30,2
Club activities for agencies	2,38	,92	28,6	32,8	38,6
Join in adventure together	2,87	1,19	21,7	42,9	35,4
Weighted mean	2,50				

Means= 1 very important, 2 important, 3 no idea, 4not important , 5 not very important

The findings of an analysis of out of business relations between agencies and hotel companies are shown in Table 6. It is found that one third of hotel companies have out of business relations with agencies. However, these kinds of activities such as entertainment, adventure and club activities are not important events for agencies.

Table 7. Promotion Activities for Encouraging Agencies

	Perceived importance			Evaluation of current situation (services oh hotels)		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	%		
				Enough	No idea	Not Enough
Collectively advertising	62	1,66	,74	52,9	21,7	25,4
Providing payment options	62	1,85	,94	46,0	30,7	23,3
Bonus, reward, premium	63	1,87	,94	50,2	24,9	24,9
Gifts, promotional materials	63	1,90	,96	58,7	18,0	23,3
Financial programs (discounts even in small quantity)	63	1,94	,98	49,7	30,2	20,1
Giving agency firm identity card	61	1,98	,94	49,2	25,4	25,4
Rewarding new client by money (discount, cash)	62	2,53	1,05	24,9	30,7	44,4
Weighted mean		1,96				

Means= 1 very important, 2 important, 3 no idea, 4not important , 5 not very important

Table 7 shows the findings of promotion activities for encouraging agencies. According to table agencies perceive that collectively advertising is important though it is found that half of hotel companies' co-advertising effort is enough(52,9%). Comparing with the other promoting activities, rewarding the clients by money, giving firm identity card, discounts (even in small quantity), and promotion materials are relatively unimportant for agencies.

Table 8. Promotion Activities Intended for Clients

	Perceived importance		Evaluation of current situation (services oh hotels)		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	%		
			Enough	No idea	Not Enough
Sales campaigns	1,50	,67	76,7	13,8	9,5
Informing the client concerning agencies (links on the web etc.)	1,59	,78	58,2	18,0	23,8
Advertising	1,55	,72	62,9	17,5	19,6
Training the agencies at finding new clients	1,71	,84	37,6	37,0	25,4
Demonstrations	1,76	,84	61,4	22,2	16,4
Sales on internet	1,94	1,19	57,1	24,4	18,5
Co-marketing activities	2,03	,94	38,6	36,5	24,9
Giving trials	2,16	1,14	31,2	43,4	25,4
Establishing quota for agencies	2,26	1,01	44,4	42,3	13,3
Weighted mean	1,83				

Means= 1 very important, 2 important, 3 no idea, 4not important , 5 not very important

Promoting activities intended for clients are examined in Table 8. The findings indicate that sales campaigns are the most important promotion method. According to agencies' viewpoint, majority of hotels are successful at sales campaigns (76,7%). Informing client about the agencies and activities of advertising intended for the clients are important promoting activities. Moreover hotels are successful at these activities. Hotel companies are found relatively unsuccessful in training the agencies at finding new clients, giving trials and co-marketing activities.

Conclusion

Tourism agencies are intermediaries between hotels and their customers. Therefore agencies have enormous importance in finding customers for hotels. Despite the fact that hotels want to have a priority in the list of tourism agencies, tourism agencies do not give equal opportunity for finding customers to all listed hotels for some reasons such as lack of knowledge, weak communication, etc. Tourism agencies expect some incentives. The channel relations between hotels and tourism agencies exemplify a business to business marketing. This study investigates the relations between agencies and hotels in Turkey, from the perspective of business to business marketing.

In this study, six main variables and their sub variables are investigated for examining agencies attitudes to hotels. The findings indicate that, generally speaking, tourism agencies have positive attitudes to hotel companies. Based on the findings, it could be suggested that the following factors are the most important ones which determine agencies' attitudes: communication with the agencies, supports for agencies, relationship between agencies and hotel companies, promotion activities intended for clients and agencies, promotion activities encouraging, and agencies out of business relations between agencies and hotel company.

The findings of the research indicate that the intermediaries are found the hotels successful. Factors which are important for agencies also found adequate or vice versa. It could be investigated whether agencies' demand or hotels' success dominate in this relation. This offers a direction for future research.

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